

Hygiene and Infection Control

Basic Hygiene and Basic Infection Control Practices

Good hygiene for both the caregiver and the client are essential for maintaining good health.

Handwashing is the caregiver's best friend. Handwashing is the single best way to avoid infection with contagious diseases and prevents germs from spreading.

Handwashing Tips: Sing "Happy Birthday to Me": Singing "Happy Birthday" to yourself while washing your hands helps you remember the length of time necessary to properly wash your hands with soap and water = **15 seconds**.

Caregivers should wash their hands for 15 seconds for EACH HAND

Wash Hands **BEFORE Direct Contact** with the client and **AFTER each contact**.

Handwashing Techniques:

1. Wet each hand thoroughly and apply antibacterial soap.
2. Rub your hands together making sure you scrub the entire hand, including in-between the fingers.
3. Scrub each hand for 15 seconds.
4. Be sure to clean under the fingernails as most germs hide under and around your fingernails.
5. Artificial nails should be avoided as they are difficult to clean.
6. Jewelry can serve as a nest for germs so remove when washing your hands.
7. Rinse both hands in warm water. Avoid very hot water as it can harm the skin and add to infections.
8. Be sure to rinse ALL the soap off of your hands.
9. Dry hands completely. Paper towels are suggested although motion-activated dryers are the best but obviously not usually present in a senior's home...but just remember when in a public bathroom the motion-activated dryers are the best option.

Remember, always wash your hands:

- After contact with the client
- Before and after situations in which your hands are going to be contaminated
- After bathroom breaks
- After lunch breaks
- Before preparing food
- After preparing food
- After sneezing
- After coughing
- Before putting on gloves
- After taking off gloves

Strict handwashing routines are the gold standard for reducing infections associated with health care. Infections communicated in nursing homes, hospitals and doctor's offices are linked to nearly 100,000 deaths a year affect

more than 1 million patients. When accompanying as senior to any of these facilities, always ask the medical professionals: **“Have you washed your hands?”**.

Electronic sensors, thermal imaging and video cameras are being used to help monitor consistent hand-washing at health care facilities.

Take hand-washing seriously: for your health and for the senior’s health.

Types of Soap:

1. **Plain Soap:** removes surface residue but does not kill micro-organisms that are on the skin, instead it suspends the micro-organisms.
2. **Anti-Microbial Soap:** removes dirt and residue from your skin and uses an agent that will kill most micro-organisms. Some agents in this type of soap will continue to kill micro-organisms after your hands are dry.
3. **Anti-Septic Handrubs:** these gel-type of disinfectants will decrease the micro-organisms on your skin, but soap and water are always best.

Best Soap for Handwashing: Anti-Microbial Soap

Personal Protective Equipment:

1. **Disposable Gloves:** required when you may come into contact with blood or body fluids. Discard after use.
2. **Disposable Aprons:** wear when there is a risk of clothing being contaminated with blood or body fluids or when a care recipient has a known infection.
3. **Face Masks:** where if concerned the nose or mouth will be splashed when caring for someone with a contagious infection.

About Gloves: gloves may protect the person wearing the gloves but micro-organisms can be passed from the outside of the glove to the senior client.

Be Sure the Gloves are Clean on the Outside and DISCARD AFTER USE

Gloves do NOT take the place of proper hygiene.

- Key situations where hand hygiene should be performed include:
 1. Before touching a patient, even if gloves will be worn
 2. Before exiting the patient’s care area after touching the patient or the patient’s immediate environment
 3. After contact with blood, body fluids or excretions, or wound dressings
 4. Prior to performing an aseptic task (e.g., placing an IV, preparing an injection)
 5. If hands will be moving from a contaminated-body site to a clean-body site during patient care
 6. After glove removal

How Infections Spread: Micro-organisms are also called germs and are tiny living things seen only with a microscope. This is why thoroughly washing your hands is important. Pathogenic organisms can produce diseases referred to as infections. Avoid infections by avoiding micro-organisms.

Home Infection Control Measures

- **Handwashing:**
 - Wash hands thoroughly before and after all patient care, self care, meal preparation, and upon arrival and departure from patient home. Scrub hands for 15 seconds each.
- **Disposable Items/Equipment:**
 - Double bag all paper, plastic, or non-reusable items in a waterproof bag. Fasten securely. Dispose of bag in trash receptacle.

Example of disposable items:

- paper cups
- dressings
- chemotherapy supplies
- urinary/suction catheters
- mattress pad and tubing, etc.
- tissues
- plastic equipment
- commode pail

- **Wash hands after handling any type of disposable items/equipment.**

- **Non-Disposable Items/Equipment:**

- Soiled laundry should be washed apart from other household laundry in hot, soapy water. Handle these items as little as possible to avoid spreading germs. Household bleach should be added if viral contamination is present.

Examples of soiled items:

- towels
- laundry
- clothing

- Equipment utilized by the patient should be cleaned daily. Small items (except thermometers) should be washed in hot, soapy water and dried with clean towels.

Examples of Equipment:

- commodes
- mattresses
- walkers
- suction machines
- wheelchairs

- bath seats
 - oxygen equipment
- Thermometers should be wiped with alcohol after use.
- Household cleaners such as Lysol or diluted bleach may be used to wipe off equipment. Follow equipment cleaning instructions for equipment and ask your nurse/therapist for clarification.
- Liquids used for cleaning may be discarded in the toilet and the container cleaned with hot, soapy water and rinsed with boiling water and allowed to dry.
- **Wash hands after cleaning non-disposable items.**
- **Sharp Objects:**
 - Place used sharp objects directly into clean, rigid containers with resealable lids. Use coffee cans or rigid plastic containers. Never overfill these containers or recap needles once used. Seal containers with lids and tape securely. Dispose in trash receptacle.
 - Examples of sharp objects:
 - needles
 - scissors
 - staples
 - IV catheters
 - syringes
 - knives
 - glass tubes or bottles
 - lancets and needles
 - **Wash hands after disposing of sharp object container.**
- **Spills in the Home:**
 - Blood/bloody substance spills are cleaned by putting on gloves and wiping fluid with paper towels. Then use a cleaning solution of bleach and water (1 cup of bleach mixed in 10 cups of water, or 1 tsp dry bleach mixed in ½ cup water) to wipe up area again. Double bag towels and dispose in trash receptacle.
 - **Wash hands thoroughly after handling blood or body substance.**